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ABSTRACT

An assessment of the Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS) reveals that small colleges can benefit from the consistency of standardized responses in creating individual planning data systems. HEGIS has a long enough history to have stabilized its several instruments. However, if one is looking to create student or personnel specific data bases, HEGIS data will probably be too vague. Instead of approaching data collection for HEGIS in a haphazard manner, colleges should: gather all of the forms in one place under one office of policy and planning; do longitudinal studies with HEGIS data; do comparative studies using other institutions' HEGIS data; and encourage annual cross-institutional studies to provide both longitudinal and comparative information for a consortium of colleges interested in doing data planning. Possible studies that can be conducted using HEGIS data are briefly explained. Research directors should be aware that HEGIS data is incomplete on personnel composition and financial aid statistics. Federal form EEO-6 provides a more comprehensive picture of each institution's personnel, while the FISAP form gives more detailed information on institutional financial aid. Appendices include an outline of HEGIS data elements and a document reporting HEGIS history and various survey instruments developed by the National Center for Education Statistics in May, 1978. (DC)

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About That Data Base That is Hiding in the Closet---

A Contributed Paper Presented at the
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For many small institutions, Institutional Research, a part-time exercise, amounts to a process of scrambling around looking for the answers to questions on some external survey instrument. Once the form is completed and mailed it is forgotten as the person responsible for a particular survey gets back to his or her regular duties or to the next external survey that needs to be completed.

Institutional Research at these institutions is fractured, reactive and consists of repeated return to source data for information. There is little time, energy or effort expended on using data for planning. When the idea of planning data is mentioned, the institution responds, "We don't have time to develop a planning data base, we're too busy filling out the HEGIS report."

But what is the HEGIS survey? It is, in fact, a series of survey instruments which describe several dimensions of colleges and universities. Appendix I is a compilation of the data which institutions voluntarily provide to the National Center for Education Statistics through HEGIS. Appendix II is a document reporting the HEGIS history and descriptions of the various survey instruments which was prepared by NCES in May, 1978.

The question then is, since a general survey of higher education exists and is completed by almost all colleges and universities, does it have any potential for use by a small college as the corpus of a planning data system? My response is, yes, with certain limitations. There are at least two important elements which enhance this possibility. One is consistency. HEGIS has a long enough history to have stabilized its several instruments. For the most common parts, last year's form is identical to this year's survey. In addition, the form is standardized. There are definitions for each data element in the survey. This is not to say that each person who completes a HEGIS form interprets the definitions the same, or that everyone completes the form with the information which is requested. Can we be sure that any completion of a survey meets these criteria?

If one is looking for a student specific data base, one which contains detailed information concerning all students which can be stored, retrieved, and manipulated in order to provide aggregated data on an institution's students, then

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that person is beyond using HEGIS as the basis for her or his planning data base. The same can be said for a personnel specific data base. It is my presumption that the small institution is at "ground zero"; that it is looking for some way to begin to attack the problem of planning data. At this level HEGIS can be helpful. In two or three years an institution may find that its questions can no longer be answered with HEGIS data. At this point the institution is ready for a more sophisticated planning data base.

I do not wish to create the impression that HEGIS is a complete data system. It has serious gaps. One is in the area of personnel. HEGIS annually collects data concerning only the number, rank and salary of full-time faculty members. The survey occasionally collects data concerning administrative personnel. Nothing is included in HEGIS about part-time faculty members or about other institutional personnel. There is another federal form, the EEO-6 Form which provides a comprehensive picture of each institution's personnel. I would suggest that it be used to supplement HEGIS in the area of personnel for the data base. Surprisingly enough, NCES which is charged to gather data to describe the impact of federal programs, does not include anything in the HEGIS package concerning the utilization of federal student financial aid or questions concerning the type and volume of categorical aid. The "Fisap", the form through which the institution reports utilization of financial aid and makes application for continuation of federal aid monies can help in the former area. The latter is still a void. The real theme of my homily is that regular reports and surveys which the institution completes should be reviewed to see if the information provided to the federal government or some other agency might not be used by the institution for planning. HEGIS is only a convenient example, but others might include a state report or a report to your denomination's Board for Higher Education.

How can HEGIS be used? The first step is to gather all of the forms in one place. I suspect that in the small college HEGIS is completed in at least three places, the registrar's office, the business office and the library. Wherever HEGIS is completed, it is viewed as an isolated and painful chore. The same information in the hands of someone with policy and planning concerns can be a gold mine. (I have, perhaps, left out the REAL first step which is to identify someone with the ability and inclination to turn data into answers to policy and planning concerns.) Don't just gather this year's HEGIS but get the last several years. This helps to meet the next suggestion. Do longitudinal studies with HEGIS data. A single datum might produce an aesthetic response but it is only in some context that data have meaning and power. Look at trends over time to determine if and how the institution has changed. In addition to longitudinal studies, do comparative studies using other institutions' HEGIS data. Every president carries a list of his or her "benchmarks"; those institutions which are judged to be comparable to the president's and against whose performance her or his institution is contrasted. Use these institutions' data for your studies. Another source of comparable institutions is the institutional characteristics survey in HEGIS. The best way to conduct a comparative study is to communicate with other institutions about your research and agree to share the results if the institutions will provide copies of their reports. This fosters cooperation and communication concerning the ways the institutions are interpreting definitions. A group of institutions might get together and share the

responsibility for studies using the various HEGIS forms. If this type of cooperative effort is not feasible, an institution can request copies of HEGIS data from a variety of sources including the National Center for Education Statistics. No data which will identify an individual will be released, but all of the rest of the data are in the public domain.

The obvious best procedure is to do annual cross-institutional studies which will provide both longitudinal and comparative information. From that nasty old HEGIS, which everybody has been complaining about, then completing and forgetting, some fairly powerful studies can be done.

What are some studies which might be undertaken using HEGIS information? One possibility which comes to mind at this time is related to the residence and migration survey which is in HEGIS this year for the first time since 1975-76. With these data and some other follow-up, several questions can be answered: Where do the institution's students come from? Have there been any significant shifts in the past four years? Does the enrollment pattern match the institution's objectives for student diversity? How good is the return on money spent by the admissions office at various locations? Adding demographic data, what are the prospects for maintaining or improving the enrollment pattern observed this year?

Data concerning degrees granted are gathered every year in HEGIS. Many questions can be answered with these data: Does the institution's production of graduates match its purpose? Are there any significant shifts in the disciplines in which degrees are being granted? Are there any policy concerns associated with these shifts? Does the pattern of degrees granted match one's intuitive feeling or empirical knowledge about employment possibilities for the institution's graduates?

Longitudinal studies of enrollment data will provide some information about attrition and retention with obvious policy implications. The same data can help establish targets for succeeding years' enrollments.

Analagous studies can be done using financial data, personnel data, library data, etc. Potential cross-institutional studies are fairly obvious.

Before many years have passed, the institutional researcher will no longer be satisfied with the information which he or she can gleen from HEGIS and will develop a sophisticated planning data system. But to start such a system "cold" ..... Isn't it worthwhile to take a look at that HEGIS information that has been gathering dust in the closet all these years?

Employees in Institutions of Higher Education or entitled Salaries, Tenure, and Fringe Benefits of Full-Time Instructional Faculty (when information on all employees is not collected):
Information is required for staff employed annually and on the payroll as of October 1.
Information collected on employees other than faculty has been very inconsistent and in lieu of trying to collect this information again, NCES will be trying to use the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment Survey. Faculty information collected has been fairly consistent, however. The major change was the inclusion of information previously collected by AAUP on salaries for continuing faculty in the 1977-78 form.

Financial Statistics of Institutions of Higher Education:
Information is required for the previous fiscal year.
For 1975-76 the HEGIS financial definitions and form became compatible with the Higher Education Finance Manual (HEFM) and College and University Business Administration (CUBA). (This causes financial data collection in previous years to be incompatible with financial data collected from 1975 on.) A change in 1978-79 will be the dropping of Part G (the last page of the survey) which was required of public institutions for Bureau of the Census purposes in 1977-78. There may be future modifications to the form and definitions but they will be worked out with NACUBO.

College and University Libraries:
Information is required as of the Fall term.
Special data are sometimes required, but generally the form has been fairly consistent.

Inventory of College and University Facilities:
Information has been required as of September of the survey year.
This form has not been collected since 1974, and it will be changing to collect information on accessibility to higher education facilities for handicapped students--probably by student programs. A feasibility study using selected institutions will be conducted in 1978-79, and the full survey of all institutions will be conducted in 1980-81.

Adult/Continuing Education: Noncredit Activities in Institutions of Higher Education:
Information is required for the previous full fiscal year.
A stratified sample of higher education institutions is selected to participate in survey years. (Surveys have been done in 1968 for 1967-68, in 1976 for 1975-76, and will be done in 1978 for 1977-78.) Additionally, in 1971, 65 selected institutions were asked to respond about training programs they had for adult education.

Postsecondary Education Forms not part of HEGIS:

Postsecondary Career School Survey:
Information is reported regarding any changes since the last biennial survey.
This biennial survey was begun in 1970 to collect data on noncollegiate postsecondary schools (not required to report in HEGIS) which provide occupational training; and the survey results in a biennial publication of directories. (This form sometimes goes to state agencies and sometimes goes directly to institutions, depending upon the state agency's agreement with NCES.)

Vocational Education Data System (VEDS):
Information will be reported for the previous year of July 1-June 30.
This survey will be filled out by state agencies (sometimes higher education and sometimes vocational/technical education agencies) to represent the total state and will not be collected from institutions or represent individual institutions. A feasibility study was conducted using 8 states in 1977-78 (for 1976-77 data), and a full survey of all states will be conducted in 1979 (for 1978-79 data). States will still have to provide vocational education data in 1978-79 to the Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education (BOAE) using its standard forms.

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Appendix I

Outline of HEGIS Data Elements

Form 2300-1 — Institutional Characteristics of Colleges and Universities

- Name/Address/Phone
- Structure (Single Campus, Main Campus, Branch, Unit of Multi-Campus Institution)
- Date Established/First College Work Offered/Degrees First Granted
- Accreditation-Regional and Professional
- Institutional Control
- Sex of Student Body
- Calendar
- Level of Offerings
- Types of Programs
- Enrollment
- Admissions Requirements
- Names and Titles of Academic Officers

2300-2.1/2.2 — Degrees and Other Awards

- Academic Area by Racial/Ethnic Breakdown by Degree Level by Sex
  and/or
- Academic Field by Degree Level by Sex

2300-2.3 — Fall Enrollment and Compliance Report

- Academic Area (selected) by Full/Part-Time by Academic Level by Racial/Ethnic Breakdown by Sex
  or
- Full/Part-Time by Academic Level by Sex

2300-2.8 — Residence and Migration of College Students

- State by Degree/Program Level by Sex
- State by First Time Students by Sex
- State by Transfer Students by Sex

2300-2.9 — Enrollment by Field

- No longer collected

2300-3 — Employees in Institutions of Higher Education

- Titles, Salaries and Sex of Selected Administrators
  and/or
- Salaries, Tenure and Fringe Benefits of Full-Time Institutional Faculty

2300-4 — Financial Statistics of Institutions of Higher Education (for previous year)

- Current Fund Revenues by Source
- Current Fund Expenditures and Mandatory Transfers by Source
- Physical Plant Assets
- Indebtedness on Physical Plant
- Endowment Assets
- Statement of Changes in Fund Balances

From Public Institutions Only (for the Bureau of the Census)

- Selected Revenues
- Selected Expenditures
- Debt Outstanding, Issued, and Retired
- Cash and Security Holdings at End of the Fiscal Year

2300-5 College and University Libraries

Current Periodical Subscriptions
Library Collections
Staff by Title by Sex by Full/Part-Time with Salaries
Hours of Student Employment in Libraries
Library Usage
Library Hours/Days per Week
Library Finances

2300-7 Inventory of College and University Facilities

Building Inventory - Condition/Ownership/Year of Construction by Assignable/Gross Square Feet
Total Campus by Room Use Categories by Assignable Square Feet
Total Campus by Room Use and Program Classification Categories by Assignable Square Feet
Accessibility for Handicapped Students

2300-8 Adult and Continuing Education: Non-Credit Activities in Institutions

Institutional Units that Scheduled Non-Credit Activities
Registration in Non-Credit Adult/Continuing Education by Field (and Continuing Professional Education)
Structure and Administration of Continuing Education

HISTORY OF NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS (NCES) POSTSECONDARY SURVEYS
Actual 1966-67 thru 1977-78 and Scheduled 1978-79 thru 1982-83

Survey Form Name and Number		Actual I 1966-67	II 1967-68	III 1969-69	IV 1969-70	V 1970-71	VI 1971-72	VII 1972-73	VIII 1973-74	IX 1974-75	X 1975-76	XI 1976-77	XII 1977-78	Scheduled XIII 1978-79	XIV 1979-80	XV 1980-81	XVI 1981-82	XVII* 1982-83
HIGHER EDUCATION GENERAL INFORMATION SURVEY (HEGIS)																		
Institutional Contact.	2300-1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Degrees Conferred-4 Yr In.	2300-2.1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X*	X*	X	X*	X	X*	X
2 Yr In.	2300-2.2																	
Fall Enrollment/Compliance	2300-2.3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X*	X	X*	X	X*	X	X*
Residence/Migration	2300-2.8			X				X			X				X?			
Enrollment by Field	2300-2.9	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		Will no longer collect this information.				
Fall Employees (Ind Fac)							X	X				X						
Fall Instruct Faculty (only)	2300-3	X	X	X	X	X				X	X		X**	X	X	X	X	X
Financial Statistics	2300-4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Coll and Univ Libraries	2300-5	X	X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X		X	
Coll and Univ Facilities	2300-7	X		X	X	X	X			X				Study #		X		
Adult Continuing Educ.	2300-8			Sample			Sample					Sample		Sample		Sample		Sample
OTHER NCES SURVEYS RELATING TO HIGHER EDUCATION																		
Postsecondary Career Schools	2358-2											X		X		X		
Vocational Educ Data Syst													Study +		X			

Racial information required. (Form will stay the same, with racial areas shaded in years racial data not required so that the racial information can be filled in and collected at the state level if desired.) Racial data are being collected for the Office of Civil Rights (OCR). 5/12/78

*In 1977-78 NCES added to the information they have collected on full-time faculty (form 2300-3) the information previously collected by AAUP on salaries for continuing faculty; and NCES agreed to publish faculty salary data.

The Inventory of College and University Facilities will be changing to collect information on accessibility to higher education facilities for handicapped students and will probably be requiring information by student programs. This will be done for the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), which requested a feasibility study be conducted in 1978-79 with a full universe survey in 1980-81.

A feasibility study of the Vocational Education Data System (VEDS) was conducted in 1977 (using 1976-77 data), and a full survey will be sent to all states in 1979-80 (for 1978-79 data).

Note: This history summarizes when forms with the number and name indicated were distributed. It does not necessarily mean that the forms were consistent in structure or definition. The only discontinued form in HEGIS was form 2300-6 on Enrollment Projections, which was discontinued after HEGIS III.

CONSISTENCY OF NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS (NCES) POSTSECONDARY SURVEYS

Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS):

Institutional Characteristics of Colleges and Universities:
Information is reported in July to represent status for the coming year.
Form has been fairly consistent in structure over the years. Changes have involved variance to the accrediting agencies listed, to the list of administrators to be included, and to the classification of institutions for published information. No change to the form is anticipated in the near future.

Degrees and Other Formal Awards Conferred Between July 1 and June 30:
Information is required of the previous year.
(Different forms are used for two-year institutions versus four-year institutions.)
Form has been fairly consistent in structure. Major change has been the addition of racial information for 10 selected programs in 1976-77. Racial data were required again in 1977-78 and then became required biennially in odd years. The form will stay the same with racial areas shaded in years racial data are not required.

Fall Enrollment in Institutions of Higher Education or (in even years) Fall Enrollment and Compliance Report of Institutions of Higher Education:
Information is reported for the current Fall Term.
Form has become consistent in the past few years with the major change being the addition of racial information in 1976-77. Racial data will be required every other year in even years; and when it is required separate forms for 10 selected instructional program areas must be filled out. The form will stay the same with racial areas shaded in years racial data are not required.

Residence and Migration of College Students:
Information is required for the current Fall term.
Due to the nature of this data it is only collected every three to four years. The form may be required again in 1979-80, but there will probably be different definitions and the form may be limited to First-Time Freshmen and New Undergraduate Transfers.

Upper Division and Post-Baccalaureate Enrollment by Degree Field (previously entitled Students Enrolled for Advanced Degrees prior to 1975-76):
Information is reported for the current Fall term.
Upper division enrollment was collected in 1967, 1975, and 1976 only, but enrollments for advanced degrees were collected every year. There are no further plans to collect information on enrollments by degree field.